



A position paper from CBM and the International Disability and Development Consortium on the ECHO working paper:

'Les enfants dans les crises humanitaires: Enfants séparés et non-accompagnés, enfants soldats et éducation d'urgence'

Submitted to ECHO by Catherine Naughton CBM, July 12th 2007
On behalf of CBM and The International Disability and Development Consortium
With thanks to Dr Maria Kett, Leonard Cheshire Centre of Disability and Inclusive Development and Chair of the Conflict and Emergencies Task group of the IDDC, and Valerie Scherrer, Handicap International

We welcome the move by ECHO to provide guidance on this topic, and appreciate the opportunity to take part in the consultation process for drafting this working paper. Disability, both for adults and children, can be a cause of extreme vulnerability in crisis situations. One factor causing and compounding this vulnerability is the invisibility of adults and children with disabilities. ECHO will play a part in reducing the risk to which children with disabilities are exposed, if:

- children with disabilities are given particular attention in the present working paper, in addition to
- Disability being recognized as a risk-aggravating factor across all areas of humanitarian intervention.

Outline of this paper:

Following an introduction which outlines the particular vulnerability of children with disabilities in humanitarian situations, recommendations are presented in point form for each section of the working paper. Please feel free to contact the author for any clarifications. Annex 1 contains a list of references and Annex 2 describes the organizations supporting this position paper. (Page 6)

Introduction

Over 200 million children live with serious disabilities; 10% of children are either born with an impairment, or become disabled before the age of 19.ⁱ Children with disabilities are amongst the most stigmatized and excluded of all the worlds' children. Misunderstanding and fear of children with disabilities results in their marginalization within their family, community, at school and in wider society. The discrimination they suffer leads to poor health, affects their self esteem, limits their access to education and puts them at higher risk of abuse and neglect.ⁱⁱ According to current estimates children

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with disabilities are 1.7 times more likely to be subjected to violence and abuse than their non-disabled peers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Disability is known to be a risk-aggravating factor in emergencies. Children with disabilities are exposed to greater risk of being separated from their families, of being unable to recognize and escape from danger, finding their way to safety or identifying their families.^{iv}

According to Save the Children at least 6 million children have been permanently impaired or seriously injured as a direct result of armed conflict between 1990 and 2005.^v Conflict and natural disasters are a significant cause of childhood impairment due to a range of factors, including increased rates of injury (i.e. from landmines, small arms injuries etc), as well as lack of medical care, and disruption of preventive health care programmes (i.e vaccination campaigns).^{vi}

In Iraq recently several reports from the media show that children with intellectual disability were enrolled (in return for money to their parents) in terrorist groups and were trained as suicide bombers^{vii}.

In addition to this increased risk of impairment or injury for all children, the vulnerability of children and their families who already live with disability is exacerbated.^{viii}

'In times of insecurity, children with disabilities are often the first to be abandoned by families and the last to receive emergency relief and assistance; they also face a far higher risk of becoming victims of abuse and neglect than other children, and are more likely to be exposed to the risk of longer term psycho-social disturbances that this may give rise to.'

UNICEF Programme Guidance April 2007;
'Children with disabilities, ending discrimination and promoting participation, development and inclusion'

In humanitarian crisis, both children and adults with disabilities tend to be overlooked in emergency registration systems, and therefore they fail to receive such basic entitlements as food, water and clothing. In addition, their specific needs are often not met: they may lose mobility aids, hearing aids, etc, reducing their previous level of functioning.^{ix}

Therefore it cannot be assumed that emergency relief, assistance and protection mechanisms will adequately include children with disabilities, and effective actions need to be undertaken to protect and provide for children with disabilities in humanitarian disaster situations.^x

1 General Recommendations

1.1 In agreement with other actors at the consultation meeting on 28th June in Brussels, the present working paper should rather be titled 'particular issues affecting children in humanitarian situations', as the realm of issues concerning children goes beyond the scope of the present document.

1.2 Attention should be given to ensure that children with disabilities are included in every humanitarian intervention process, starting with identification, assessment,

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planning and monitoring. Children with disabilities and their families need to be given a voice at all stages of intervention and need to be included in all child-centered activities - health; education; child to child activities; play and sport. This will involve awareness-raising amongst all personnel, training, and specific attention to ensure an accessible, safe and supportive environment.

- 1.3 Disability prevention should be included in all ECHOs humanitarian intervention, since 77 million children are affected by conflict / natural disaster which potentially causes disability through malnutrition, injuries, lack of vaccination.
- 1.4 Families with children with disabilities should be consulted and taken into consideration when settlement areas are being planned, to ensure that all facilities including water and sanitation, health and educational activities are all accessible to them.
- 1.5 All child protection work must include a component on children with disabilities as they are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect.
- 1.6 The legal framework should include the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has one specific article on children (Article 7) and an Article on Humanitarian Situations (Article 11).^{xi} The Convention opened for signature in March this year and is the first Human Rights Convention to be signed by the European Communities, and also to the first to have a stand-alone article on International Cooperation (Article 32). This gives a legal impetus to include disability, and children with disabilities in international cooperation in general and humanitarian intervention in particular.

2 Recommendations on the introductory section:

- 2.2 Children from the most vulnerable groups, such as girl children, children affected by HIV and AIDs, girl mothers, and children with disabilities need to be considered as a key target group across all intervention processes from identification, assessment and planning, delivery of support programs, monitoring and evaluation.
- 2.3 With regard to vulnerability, a specific paragraph should be added to describe the vulnerability of children with disabilities. (See Introduction)
- 2.4 Organizations of persons with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities in the affected area and non-governmental organizations working in the field of disability should work in collaboration with other humanitarian agencies to ensure the rights of children with disabilities and their families are included in specific responses.

3 Recommendations for the section on 'Children who are separated from their parents:

- 3.1 It has already been noted in the working paper that children with disabilities run a greater risk of being separated from their parents. Children with certain impairments for example, may be less able to identify themselves or their families.
- 3.2 Identification of children with disabilities who are separated from their families and systematic follow-up to ensure a rapid reunion with their families or customary care-givers should be a priority. Families should be given adequate support to assist them in the care of their child.
- 3.3 Many children with disabilities will already be living in institutional care at the time of a conflict or emergencies. It is essential that these children are included in any humanitarian response.

4 Recommendations for the Section on Child soldiers

- 4.1 Child soldiers are exposed to violence and many are injured. It should be emphasized that during and after the process of demobilization child soldiers must have access to adequate physical and psychosocial rehabilitation to facilitate their reintegration back into their families and communities.
- 4.2 Access to education and skills training should be made available to all former child combatants through DDR programmes.^{xii}
- 4.3 All rehabilitation services supported by ECHO should ensure that they adapt their services to the needs of children and their caregivers.
- 4.4 These children are particularly vulnerable to becoming street children without specific targeted interventions.^{xiii}
- 4.5 The vulnerability of children with disabilities to being recruited as Child Soldiers should be included in child protection training and programmes.

5 Recommendations on the section on education in humanitarian situations:

UNESCO estimates that over one-third of out of school children are estimated to be children with disabilities;^{xiv} and that globally, only two per cent of children with disabilities globally receive an education.^{xv} Disability has a greater impact on access to education than gender, household economic status or rural/urban divide.^{xvi}

- 5.1 Since educational activities in crisis situations are a means of child protection as well as social interaction, learning and psychosocial support, these activities must include the children who are at most risk. For this reason particular attention needs to be paid to ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from educational activities.
- 5.2 As well as its value for the child, including children with disabilities in educational activities has the added value of giving family more time for other essential activities.
- 5.3 Planning to ensure that children with disabilities are included will involve such measures as ensuring the school buildings are physically accessible – including any schools being reconstructed; providing training and support to teachers; and awareness raising amongst teachers, parents, other children, communities, humanitarian actors and policy makers. Guidelines on including children with disabilities in educational activities in emergencies have been developed by the Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies.^{xvii}
- 5.4 Monitoring of educational activities in emergencies should include data on enrollment, attendance and drop-out, disaggregated by gender and disability.

Annex 1 References

- ⁱ Communication from the Commission 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child'
- ⁱⁱ UNICEF programme Guidance April 2007 ; Children with disabilities, ending discrimination and promoting participation, development and inclusion
- ⁱⁱⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics. 2001. Assessment of Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities. Pediatrics, 108:2:508-52. See also http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/UNICEF_Violence_Against_Disabled_Children_Report_Distributed_Version.pdf
- ^{iv} Early Childhood Matters : July 2005 , No 104. Disabled Children in Conflict Situations, Marlies van der Kroft
Disabled Children's Rights- a practical guide, Save the Children, Sweden, 2001
- ^v Protecting Children in Emergencies
Escalating Threats to Children Must Be Addressed; Save the Children, Policy Brief, volume 1, No 1 2005
- ^{vi} *Disability, Equality and human rights: a training manual for development and humanitarian organisations*, Haris (A.) and Enfield (S.), Oxfam publication, Great-Britain, 2003.
- ^{vii} IRIN Humanitarian news and analysis. IRAQ: Mentally handicapped children used in attacks April 2007
- ^{viii} UNICEF programme Guidance April 2007 ; Children with disabilities, ending discrimination and promoting participation, development and inclusion
Children with Disability in programmes Directed at Children Affected by Armed Conflict. Save the Children Sweden, 1997
- ^{ix} Disability and Conflict, IDDC Seminar report, 2000
http://www.iddc.org.uk/dis_dev/key_issues/dis_conf_rep.doc
- ^x Early Childhood Matters : July 2005 , No 104. Disabled Children in Conflict Situations, Marlies van der Kroft, UNICEF programme Guidance April 2007 ; Children with disabilities, ending discrimination and promoting participation, development and inclusion
- ^{xi} For the full text of the Convention. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm>
- ^{xii} The World Bank are already undertaking work in this in the Great Lakes Region of Africa which includes disabled former combatants (see www.mdrp.org)
- ^{xiii} It is estimated that a third of all street children have a disability. (Groce 2005).
URL:http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/UNICEF_Violence_Against_Disabled_Children_Report_Distributed_Version.pdf
- ^{xiv} UNESCO (2006) *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*.
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=38522&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- ^{xv} Filmer, D. (2005) *Disability, Poverty and Schooling in Developing Countries: Results from 11 Household Surveys*. World Bank Discussion Paper.
- ^{xvii} <http://www.ineesite.org/page.asp?pid=1152>

Annex 2 Submitting organisations: CBM and IDDC

CBM is an international Christian development organisation whose primary purpose is to improve the quality of life of the world's poorest persons with disabilities and those at risk of disability. CBM works with partner organisations in low income countries to both develop and ensure that persons with disabilities and their families have ready access to affordable and comprehensive health care and rehabilitation programmes, quality education programs and livelihood opportunities. Working with persons with disabilities, CBM advocates for their inclusion in all aspects of society, and for the inclusion of disability in international cooperation.
www.cbm.org

IDDC is a self-managing group currently consisting of 19 non-governmental organizations and disabled peoples organizations supporting disability and development work in over 100 countries globally. IDDC's aim is to more effectively and efficiently promote the rights of persons with disabilities through collaboration and sharing of information and expertise. To achieve this aim, IDDC believes development policy and practice should be inclusive.

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